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ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
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FM AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3591  
RUCPDOC/USDOC WASHDC  
RUEHRC/USDA FAS WASHDC 0049  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC  
RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0269  
INFO RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 0494  
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RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE 0017

UNCLAS OUAGADOUGOU 000332

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ACCRA FOR USAID  
DAKAR FOR FAS RHANSON  
USTR FOR LAURIE-AGAMA  
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: BURKINA FASO TO HOST AFRICAN "COTTON UNIVERSITY"

**¶1. Key Point:**

-- A French foundation and business school, with the financial backing of France and the European Union, are working with a regional producers association to found a "Cotton University" in Burkina Faso for students from 15 cotton-producing nations.

**¶2. Key Judgment:**

-- The impetus behind the creation of this school was the recognition that poor management techniques by African producers, not just subsidies by global competitors, are also behind their sector's woes.

End Key Point and Key Judgment:

**¶3. African cotton producers have concluded that removal of American and European subsidies will not alone resolve their industry's current difficulties. One solution proposed by African heads of state during the 24th Africa-France Summit in February 2007 in Cannes, France was the creation of a "Cotton University" similar to U.S. universities with faculties focusing on the cotton sector, aka "cotton schools."**

**¶4. In this regard, the Association of African Cotton Producers (APROCA) recently announced that, starting in September 2008, Burkina Faso would become home to a newly founded "Cotton University." This "University" will be located on the campus of the University of Bobo-Dioulasso with an annual enrollment of 20 to 30 new students from 15 African cotton-producing nations. Classes will better acquaint African cotton producers with the competitive realities of the world cotton industry by offering courses in management, marketing, and research. The curriculum will be taught by skilled technicians, who will explain modern production methods, capacity building techniques, risk management, cotton classification, and the dynamics of world cotton prices.**

**¶5. The project will be jointly sponsored by APROCA, the prestigious HEC School of Management in Paris, and the Foundation for World Agriculture and Rural Life (FARM), a French non-profit organization**

whose founding organizations include a USAID-counterpart, the Agence Francaise de Developpement. The school, which is expected to cost Euro 4.6 million (US 7.2 million) to operate during the first three years, will be run with financial backing from France and the European Union. HEC plans a Paris-based cotton exhibition at the end of May to highlight the opening of the new school.

¶6. The city of Bobo-Dioulasso, in southwestern Burkina Faso, was chosen as the University's future home because of its reputation as "the capital of the Burkinabe cotton industry." The area is also well-known for its successful field trials of genetically modified or "Bt" cotton with U.S. biotechnology company, Monsanto.

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